105 439 In regard to foreign trade, the predominant share of the United Kingdom and Germany will at once attract attention. For the Baltic States the United Kingdom represents an overwhelmingly important export market for dairy produce, bacon, and timber—almost as important relatively as the British market is to Denmark. The same, though to a lesser degree, is true of Germany. For both these countries the Baltic States offer a valuable market for manufactured goods. The struggle for this market has been keenly contested, with the advantage in favour of Germany until 1934, when the new British Trade Agreements redressed the balance in favour of the United Kingdom.

105 642 In the political sphere, a phenomenon which cannot escape attention is the transformation from the ultra-democratic Constitutions promulgated in 1920 to dictatorial régimes, which appear to be groping towards some new organization of the State upon a corporative basis. In Estonia, however, since the promulgation of the new Constitution, an evident effort is being made to return to democratic government.

121 The economic chapters have been specially prepared for the Information Department, and have been divided into two main parts, the first dealing with the structure and development of the three States up to the crisis of 1931, the second describing the effects of the crisis upon their economy and their successful efforts to fight their way back to recovery.

CHATHAM HOUSE,

May 9, 1938.

5.

726 Germans and repel the Bolshevik invasion. Without the assistance,
648 inadequate though it was, of the Allied Powers, they could hardly have succeeded in establishing their independence.

1. The Fall of the Imperial Government in Russia, 1917

648 It seems clear that, in the days following the March Revolution
186 and the establishment of the Provisional Government in Russia in the spring of 1917, none of the Baltic Provinces contemplated or desired complete detachment from Russia, although they certainly seized the opportunity of making a bid for a measure of autonomy and for much-needed reforms. It was the Bolshevik Revolution at the end of the year that not only enabled, but even forced, them to go farther and to demand complete independence.

648 *Estonia.* The Estonians, who at the time of the March Revolution
186 were as yet free from German occupation, naturally profited the most by the new situation. At the request of their leaders, Prince
● 642 Lvov issued a decree or 'Special Law' on April 12 granting local autonomy to Estonia, including the island of Oesel and the northern half of Livonia, where the population was Estonian; the old *Landtag* and other local bodies were replaced by a purely titular High Commissioner, to be appointed by the Provisional Government, and it was provided that an Estonian National Council and subordinate local bodies should be elected by universal, direct, secret, and proportional suffrage. The National Council was to draft a constitution for approval by an All-Russian Constituent Assembly. The provisional Government appointed M. Jaan Poska, the mayor of Reval, as High Commissioner, and by a further decree of July 5, 1917, provided for the elections to the National Council on July 7–8. In the Council, which met on July 14 and elected M. Konstantin Paets as its president, the bourgeois parties and the Labour Group held 60 per cent. of the seats, the Social-Democrats and Social-Revolutionaries making up the remaining 40 per cent. In view of the increasingly serious military situation, the Estonian Administration also obtained permission from Petrograd, in the autumn, to organize Estonian contingents under their own officers.

When the Provisional Government gave way before the Bolshevik *coup d'état* in November 1917, the Estonian National Government, taking advantage of Trotsky's declaration of the right of self-determination for dissident nationalities, proclaimed complete political independence of Russia on November 28. The Proclamation[1] also provided for the immediate election of a Constituent Assembly and for the delegation of the Council's powers, 'during the interruption

[1] For text see M. W. Graham, *New Governments of Eastern Europe* (I. Pitman & Sons, Ltd., 1928), p. 646.

Estonia. Latvia.

of its sessions', to a Committee of Elders and to the Administration. 648
The Baltic Barons, on the other hand, declared themselves the sole 186
authorized representatives of the people, proclaimed the definite 642
separation of Estonia from Russia, and appealed to Germany for military aid against the Bolsheviks.

The immediate consequence of the Proclamation of November 28 [669]
was the temporary arrest of M. Paets and the dispersal of the National Council by the Bolsheviks, who, however, allowed the elections to the Constituent Assembly to take place during January 1918, in the hope of getting a majority of votes for their own candidates. When it became clear that they would not do so, a civil war broke out which was only ended by the arrival of the German armies in February. On February 24, the single day left to them between the flight of the Bolsheviks and the coming of the Germans, the Committee of Elders seized the opportunity to promulgate a manifesto reaffirming Estonia's independence as a Republican State, defining her frontiers, and instituting a Provisional Government under M. Paets. The German occupation during the following months postponed all further constitutional development until after the Armistice of November 11, 1918.

Latvia. The history of the Lettish nationalist movement up to the 648
signature of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918 ran a some- 186
what similar course, and thereafter suffered a similar temporary 668
eclipse until the Armistice was signed; for, although the southern half of what is now Latvia, with the exception of Latgale, was from the summer of 1915 onwards under German occupation, Lettish nationalists in the northern half and in Petrograd were able to conduct negotiations with the Imperial and Provisional Governments in Russia, and later to defy the Bolshevik authorities in much the same way as did the Estonian leaders, though with rather less success.

Towards the end of the Imperialist régime, when half the inhabi- [575]
tants of Courland were refugees in Russia, the Lettish deputies of the Duma, together with representatives of the exiled Letts, among them J. Čakste and Z. A. Meierovics, formed a Latvian Refugees' Committee in Petrograd, which tried to obtain promises of autonomy and reform from the Government. When the Provisional Government assumed authority in the spring of 1917, they were urged to establish an autonomous administrative district consisting of southern Livonia, Courland, and parts of Vitebsk; less amenable to Lettish than to Estonian entreaties, they did, however, issue decrees appointing new and more democratic-minded governors and permitting elections to local government bodies in the unoccupied districts.

In Latvia, as in Estonia, the Bolshevik Revolution precipitated

mission to send a delegate, had made a new official declaration of Lithuanian independence on February 16, 1918, this time on the basis of the original Vilna resolutions of September 1917, with a renewed demand for a Constituent Assembly.

The German General Staff now conceived the idea of a personal union of Lithuania with Saxony, under a monarchical government. In order to thwart this plan, and under pressure from the clerical party in Germany, the *Taryba*, on June 14, 1918, invited the Catholic Duke William of Urach—alleged to be a Württemberg descendant of the old Lithuanian king Mindaugas—to ascend the throne of an independent Lithuania as Mindaugas II. The invitation was accepted, in spite of the strong opposition of a section of the *Taryba* itself, not to mention that of the German General Staff. But, with military defeat growing daily more certain, the latter's authority was beginning to wane, and on October 20 the new Chancellor, Prince Max of Baden, informed the *Taryba* that it had been decided to delegate full legislative and administrative power to a Lithuanian Government, as soon as it should be constituted, and to remove the German occupying forces as soon as possible. The *Taryba*, therefore, on November 2, withdrew the invitation to the Duke of Urach, leaving the form of government to be decided by the future Constituent Assembly. Meanwhile, constituting itself as the legislative body, it elected a triumvirate, consisting of MM. Smetona, Staugaitis, and Šilingas, who on November 5 invited M. Voldemaras to form a non-party Cabinet and to negotiate with the various nationalities.

3. The German Evacuation and the Bolshevik Invasion

As soon as the Armistice of November 11, 1918, was signed, the leaders in each country set about the task of organizing their respective administrations, consolidating the political independence of the new Governments, and finally drafting constitutions.

The Estonian National Council met on November 20, 1918, after nine months' rustication; M. Paets was released from imprisonment, and the Government set up under him on February 24 was confirmed in its authority.

In Latvia, M. Karl Ulmanis's democratic *bloc* was now joined by the members of the Latvian Refugees' Committee and of the Latvian National Council from Petrograd, and an all-Latvian Council of State was formed of some 100 members of all parties, except the Social-Revolutionaries and Bolsheviks.[1] The Assembly met at Riga on November 18, 1918, elected M. Čakste as its president, and formed

[1] About two-thirds of the seats, which were allotted according to the votes received by these parties in the elections under the Provisional Government, were held by peasants and workers, while the remaining third of the members were merchants, manufacturers, and representatives of the national minorities.

642 646 a Provisional Government with M. Ulmanis as Prime Minister and M. Meierovics as Foreign Minister, pending the convocation of a Constituent Assembly.

642 In Lithuania, M. Sleževičius became Prime Minister in the Cabinet formed in November 1918 by M. Voldemaras, when the latter left to attend the Peace Conference in Paris. A provisional National Assembly, the 200 members of which were chosen by mass meetings all over the country, met in Kaunas (Kovno)[1] from January 17 to 23, 1919, to draft a republican constitution and to re-elect and expand the *Taryba*; M. Smetona was elected President of the State on April 4.

728 648 Before the constitutions could be drafted, however, the new Provisional Governments had to concentrate their whole energies on the military situation brought about by the Armistice of November 1918. The Armistice Convention had provided that the German troops were to evacuate all territories which were formerly a part of the Russian Empire 'as soon as the Allies shall consider this desirable, having regard to the interior conditions of those territories' (Article 12), and were to 'cease at once all requisitions, seizures, or coercive measures for obtaining supplies intended for Germany in . . . Russia' (Article 14). It was the intention of the Allies that the German forces should do their utmost to stem the Bolshevik advance, and that, when their services were no longer needed, they should withdraw from the Baltic Provinces without reaping any political reward for their efforts. This was clearly too much to expect, and the Germans, by withdrawing rapidly and without permission in November 1918, and by removing all supplies of arms, food, and even rolling-stock as they went, in violation of Article 14, not only facilitated the Bolshevik invasion, but did their best to put the new Baltic Governments in the position of having to turn to them for assistance.

648 721 At the end of November the Red Armies had begun to penetrate into Estonia from Narva and the Finnish coast; on January 5, 1919, they were in Vilna, and the Lithuanian Government had retired to Kaunas, while the Latvian Government had been driven from Riga to take refuge at Liepāja (Libau). By the end of February the Bolsheviks had overrun Latvia and a large part of Lithuania.

[723] In Estonia, General Laidoner and Captain Pitka organized an army and marine force from the remnants of the Estonian regiments of 1917, and—with the aid of Finnish loans and volunteers, gifts of ammunition and foodstuffs from Great Britain, and the occasional presence of British warships in Tallinn (Reval) and Liepāja under Admiral Sinclair—put up a heroic resistance, and by the beginning of February 1919 had temporarily cleared the country.

[1] Vilna was then occupied by the Bolsheviks.

of Ambassadors on March 15, 1923. On the western frontier, 648
Lithuania was more successful; the Allies had compelled Germany to 728
cede the Memel area to them with a view to its later cession to [167]
Lithuania, but, while they were still negotiating on the subject, the Lithuanian Government took matters into its own hands, and on January 10, 1923, sent troops to occupy the area by force. This *fait accompli* was recognized by the Allies in the Memel Convention of 1924.[1]

One of the last acts of the Estonian Committee of Elders before 648
the exchange of Bolshevik for German terrorization in 1918, had been the issue of a declaration that 'Estonia must immediately be declared a neutral country, and to this end international guarantees must be sought from foreign Powers'. They had followed this up by sending representatives abroad to secure support and recognition from the Allies, and the Latvian and Lithuanian National Assemblies had pursued the same policy. At that time the Allied Powers were glad enough to do what little they could in the way of moral encouragement of any organization which was in conflict with Bolshevism.[2] *De jure* recognition of the Baltic States was delayed, however, owing to the persistent hope entertained by the Allied Powers in general, and by President Wilson in particular—a hope encouraged by Kolchak and the Russian reactionaries—that the Bolshevik régime might yet be destroyed. The Powers would have liked, therefore, to preserve a territorially indivisible Russia which could ultimately be handed back intact in the event of some form of constitutional monarchy being established. But the treaties concluded between the Baltic States and Soviet Russia in 1920, and the disappearance of the last hopes of a successful intervention, paved the way at last for the acceptance of the new order as a permanent one. Great Britain and France granted *de jure* recognition to Estonia and Latvia on January 26, 1921; and, on September 22 of the same year, the three Baltic States were admitted as Members of the League of Nations, although Lithuania did not, owing to the Vilna controversy, receive *de jure* recognition from Great Britain and France until December 20, 1922.[3]

Constitutions Adopted. Meanwhile, the new Governments had 642
been pushing forward with the work of reconstruction and constitution-drafting, in so far as circumstances permitted. In Estonia a Constituent Assembly was elected in April 1919; the Paets Cabinet resigned, and was replaced by a new bourgeois coalition Government

[1] For an examination of the Memel question, see below, pp. 93–102.

[2] A limited and provisional *de facto* recognition was accorded to Estonia by France and Great Britain in March, and by Italy in May 1918; to Latvia by France in January, and by Great Britain in November 1918; and to Lithuania by Great Britain in September 1919.

[3] The U.S.A. delayed recognition of all three States until July 27, 1922.

under M. Otto Strandman. A provisional Constitution adopted on June 4 was replaced, a year later, by the definitive Constitution of June 15, 1920.

In Latvia, where the Provisional Government was even more hampered than its counterpart in Estonia by the struggle with the German and Bolshevik armies,[1] elections to the Constituent Assembly were not held until April 1920. M. Čakste was elected President of the Assembly, which consisted of peasants, Socialists, and members of the other bourgeois parties (including the minorities), in roughly equal proportions. After the adoption of a provisional Constitution on June 1, the Ulmanis Cabinet resigned and was reconstituted with the support of all except the Socialists; but M. Ulmanis gradually lost the support of most of the Left parties, and was eventually succeeded by M. Meierovics, who formed a coalition Government including the Agrarians, Democrats, and some of the Social-Democrats. The definitive Constitution was adopted on February 15, 1922. The first constitutional Parliament, or *Saeima*, met on November 7, 1922, and elected Čakste as President of the State.[2]

In Lithuania elections were held in April 1920 for the Constituent Assembly, which met at Kaunas on May 15, ratified the proclamation of independence, and proceeded to the elaboration of a provisional constitution and the appointment of a new government—the *Taryba* and the Cabinet having resigned. M. Stulginskis, the President of the Constituent Assembly, was chosen to act as temporary President of the Republic, and Dr. Grinius formed a Cabinet on June 8. The final Constitution was not promulgated until August 1, 1922.

III. INTERNAL CONSOLIDATION IN THE SUCCESSION STATES

To appreciate the complexity and wide range of the problems demanding the immediate attention of the new Governments in the early days of independence, it is necessary to picture the devastating effects of the six years of military campaigns, occupations, and invasions through which the Baltic Provinces had just passed, the complete collapse of economic life, the break-down of administrative machinery, and the wastage of material and of man-power which they brought in their train. Everything had to be built up from the very beginning; not only new constitutions, but new law-courts, new schools, and new central and local government bodies had to be set up; and every activity was hampered by the relative inexperience of leaders who up till now had always been in opposition, and by the virtual disappearance of the former Russian and German official classes.

[1] See above, p. 25.

[2] Čakste was re-elected President in 1925, and held office until his death in 1927.

563 who estimate their numbers considerably higher than does the official
162 census, lived for the most part near the East Prussian frontier, where they settled as small peasants and artisans in the last century. Small Polish and Lettish minorities inhabited the districts bordering on
566 their respective countries of origin. The bulk of the Lithuanians themselves belonged to the peasant and farmer class. There were, however, fairly large bourgeois, clerical, and intellectual classes; the nobility, in so far as it still existed, resided for the most part in Poland, and was in fact almost entirely Polish.

563 The legal status of the minorities was regulated by Articles 73 and
656 74 of the Constitution of December 1922, which provided that
642 national minorities, forming 'an appreciable part of the citizens', might administer autonomously the affairs of their national culture and elect the necessary bodies to conduct these affairs in the manner prescribed by law. They might also impose taxes on their members for the needs of national culture, and might avail themselves of a proportion of the sums set aside by the State and the local government bodies for purposes of education and charity, in so far as their needs were not satisfied by the general establishments maintained by those bodies.[1]

563 In accordance with the requirements of the League of Nations, on
671 May 12, 1922, shortly after her admission to that body, Lithuania made a Declaration modelled on the Polish Minority Treaty of June 28, 1919. This guaranteed to Lithuanian nationals who belonged to racial, religious, or linguistic minorities the same treatment in law and in fact enjoyed by other nationals, as well as the right to maintain and control at their own expense charitable, religious, and social institutions, schools, and other educational establishments, and to use their own language and practise their own religion therein.[2] Provision was to be made, in towns where there was a considerable proportion of Lithuanian nationals belonging to linguistic minorities, for the instruction of children in the State primary schools in their own

[1] These rights and privileges were confirmed by Section VII of the Constitution of May 25, 1928.

[2] TABLE 2. *Minorities and Education in Lithuania.*

871

Type of school	*Year*	*Total no. of schools*	*Lithuanian*	*Jewish*	*Russian*	*German*	*Polish*	*Lettish*	*White Russian*	*Diverse*
Primary	1928–9	2,431	2,185	135	15	18	30	8	..	40
"	1935–6	2,308	2,147	109	3	10	11	13	..	15
Secondary	1928–9	122	83	29	2	3	3	1	..	1
"	1935–6	107	74	24	1	3	3	1	..	1
		students								
University	1928–9	3,812	2,555	1,070	47	30	85	10	7	8
"	1935–6	3,223	2,555	486	40	30	84		13	6

of the Estonian recruits to the Army were able to read and write. 872
A temporary setback followed the decree of 1887 forbidding the use of the Estonian language in schools, but conditions improved after the 1905 Revolution. After the establishment of their independence, both Estonia and Latvia introduced compulsory education, and in Latvia the school-leaving age is now 16 years. There is, therefore, [212] practically no illiteracy—only 3·9 per cent. of the population of Estonia were registered as illiterate in the census of 1934, and the Russian minority accounted for the greater part of these—and the standard of instruction is said to compare favourably with that of other Western countries. There are flourishing universities at Tartu in Estonia, and in Riga.

Lithuania was, by contrast, far less advanced in educational development at the time when she achieved independence, the percentage of illiteracy being as high as 32·64 in 1923. Great progress has since been made, although compulsory elementary education was not in force in all provinces until 1931. The number of primary schools increased from 877 in 1919 to 2,557 in 1936, and a law of August 1936 raised the school-leaving age to 16 years. After the Polish occupation of Vilna a new university was founded at Kaunas.

IV. CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEMS OF THE SUCCESSION STATES

1. Introduction

At a first glance, the domestic histories of the three States since the 642 ●
War seem to bear a striking resemblance. Each started with an ultra-democratic Constitution, and each has passed through a phase of dictatorship from which it is now, apparently, beginning to emerge. The factors contributing to these changes were not, however, by any means identical in each case, and the likeness between the three dictatorships was in some respects less real than apparent.

The early Constitutions of the new Republics, drafted after a careful study of those of France, Switzerland, and the United States, and above all of the Weimar Constitution of post-War Germany, owed their extreme democratic character partly to a natural reaction against the Tsarist régime, partly, too, to the political atmosphere prevailing in Europe after the victory of the Western democracies in the War. It was the prime concern of their authors to assert the sovereign power of the people, and to place such checks on the activities of those who governed them as to make either parliamentary or presidential 'absolutism' impossible.[1]

[1] For a detailed comparative study, see A. Headlam-Morley, *The New Democratic Constitutions of Europe* (Oxford University Press, 1928); texts of the Constitutions are printed as Appendices to M. W. Graham, *op. cit.* 113

646 The Legislature[2] consisted in each case, largely for reasons of economy, of a single chamber, elected for a three-year term on a very wide franchise;[1] extraordinary sessions might be convened at the request of a specified proportion of its members, of the Government (in Estonia and Latvia), or of the President (in Latvia and Lithuania).

643 In Estonia the Head of the State was the Prime Minister of the day—here again, apparently, from motives of economy; thus every change of government involved a change of President. In Latvia and Lithuania the President was elected for a three-year term[2] by the Legislature, which could recall him by a two-thirds vote, and also institute criminal proceedings against him. In Lithuania he could dissolve the *Seimas*, but in that case his own continuance in office depended on re-election by the next *Seimas*; similarly, the Latvian President could submit a proposal for the dissolution of the *Saeima* to a referendum, but if it was rejected he must himself resign. In both countries the President had the right to initiate legislation, or to return laws adopted by the Legislature (with the exception, in Lithuania, of those declared urgent by a two-thirds majority) for reconsideration; this veto could be overridden, however, by an ordinary majority in Latvia, and by a majority of the total number of deputies in Lithuania.

645 The Cabinet was responsible individually and collectively to the Legislature, and dependent on its vote of confidence; but, while in Latvia and Lithuania the Prime Minister was appointed by the President (himself selecting the other Ministers), and in Lithuania could be dismissed by him, in Estonia (where there was no President) the *Riigikogu* was supposed to elect each Minister individually.[3] All acts of the President, who was not politically responsible, had to be countersigned by a Minister; in Latvia, the appointment of the Prime Minister and proposals to dissolve the *Saeima* were exceptions to this rule.

● 642 By these provisions it was hoped to establish an elaborate counterpoise between the Legislative and Executive functions. Equally complicated measures were taken to preserve the control of the electorate over both. Apart from the usual 'bill of rights', these consisted chiefly of the popular initiative and the referendum.

[1] Citizens of both sexes who had reached the age of 20 in Estonia, and 21 in Latvia and Lithuania, were eligible to vote on a basis of direct, equal, universal, and secret suffrage, and of proportional representation. The number of deputies was fixed at 100 in the Estonian *Riigikogu* and the Latvian *Saeima*, and at 78 in the Lithuanian *Seimas*.

[2] The same person could not be elected for more than two consecutive terms.

[3] In practice, however, the function of President came to be exercised, during Cabinet crises, by the Speaker, who invited some one to form a government; after inter-party agreement, the new Prime Minister produced a list of Ministers which was accepted as a whole by the *Riigikogu*.

[2. in Constitutions after W.W.I -- 42 Analyst]

A specified number of citizens could propose a new law, or demand the amendment or abrogation of an old one: in Lithuania, if such a proposal were rejected or amended by the *Seimas*, the matter ended there; but in Estonia and Latvia the issue was then referred to a plebiscite, while in Estonia a popular verdict contradicting that of the Legislature resulted in the automatic dissolution of the latter. Moreover, in Estonia and Latvia the promulgation of any law could, at the request of one-third of the Legislature, or in the case of Latvia on the President's own initiative, be postponed for two months, during which period a sufficient number of citizens might demand its submission to a referendum. Exemption from such submission was extended, however, in both countries to certain matters, such as the budget or other financial measures, foreign treaties, the declaration of war and peace, or of a state of emergency, &c., and in Latvia to any law which had been declared urgent by a two-thirds majority or passed a second time by a three-fourths majority of the *Saeima*. A referendum was automatically required in Estonia on all constitutional changes, but in Latvia only where the most fundamental clauses were in question. In Lithuania constitutional amendments could be proposed by the *Seimas* or the Executive, or by 50,000 citizens; but, unless a referendum was demanded by the President, or by a fraction of the electorate or of the *Seimas*, a three-fifths majority vote of the latter was sufficient for their adoption.

It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that democratic institutions, as operated during a period of parliamentary government lasting from 1922 to 1926 in Lithuania, and from 1920 to 1934 in Latvia and Estonia, never functioned properly, from the time of their inception until their abrogation. The political inexperience, the individualism, and in some cases even corruption, of the party politicians —particularly in Lithuania—made them unfitted for what is, after all, the most difficult of all forms of government. Moreover, the system of proportional voting for party lists helped to encourage the growth of an absurdly large number of parties—in Latvia no fewer than twenty-eight were returned at the elections of 1925—whose members frequently represented individual interests rather than political principles, and had little contact with, and less responsibility to, the electorate. This in turn made for the weakness and instability of the Governments—between 1920 and 1934 there were eighteen Cabinets in Estonia and sixteen in Latvia; they tended, especially in Estonia, to become merely executive committees at the mercy of a heterogeneous and undisciplined Parliament. Every Cabinet had to be a coalition; if a broad one, it usually lacked constructive power; if a narrow one, it could not rely on a majority; and the negotiations

642 necessary for its formation led to the frequent prolongation of political crises by interminable party bargaining.

565 665 It is important to bear in mind that the vast majority of the inhabitants of these countries are, and have always been, peasants. Under the Tsarist régime they were ardently nationalist, and, as long as the supremacy of the Baltic Barons endured, there was also a marked tendency to Socialism. After the establishment of independence, the agrarian reforms energetically prosecuted by all three States brought into existence a large new class of small peasant proprietors, and land-hunger, the chief incentive to revolution, was virtually abolished. The Agrarian parties grew steadily stronger at the expense of the Socialists and Centre groups,[1] while Communism —now that it was associated with Soviet Russia and all that Russian domination might involve—became practically extinct as a significant force.

Given, on the one hand, the state of parliamentary atrophy described above, with its probable accentuation of the economic and financial difficulties of the period, and, on the other hand, the increasing predominance of the Agrarian parties, influenced possibly by the success of the Pilsudski *coup* in May 1926 and the German National-Socialist victory in 1933, an outside observer might be tempted to describe what has happened in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as a victory, in each case, of the peasant parties over 642 the Socialists, or of Fascism over parliamentary anarchy. Each of 186 the dictatorships, it is true, depends largely on the prestige of one 178 or two veteran statesmen, on the loyalty of the Army, and on the tacit acquiescence of the mass of the peasantry. It is also true, perhaps, that in each country an anti-foreign and anti-Semitic agrarian nationalism is becoming more and more pronounced, and, furthermore, that there is a common tendency on the part of the responsible leaders to favour the introduction of corporative institutions—although how far such an innovation would be likely to modify the existing concentration of powers it is as yet too soon to judge. But it would be misleading to stress the parallelism between the three States too much, or to conclude that the present authoritarian régimes employ the same methods and operate in the same interests in every case.

642 In Estonia, the Agrarian dictatorship of M. Paets was the last stage 578 of a race between the parliamentary groups and the extra-parliamentary and semi-Fascist organization, known as the 'Liberators'

[1] In Lithuania the strength of the Socialists never exceeded 17 per cent. of the whole *Seimas*; but in the other two countries the Left groups, although they were at first numerically stronger than the Agrarian parties and had played a prominent part in framing the Constitutions, participated in a quite disproportionately small number of Governments, and diminished in strength fairly steadily in successive elections.

1: Anonymous U-4 (no date)1938 RB1 Baltic States "B1
Estonia

League', to impose on the country their rival brands of constitutional reform; whereas in Latvia the protagonists were, on the one hand, the Agrarian party—itself accused of Fascism—with proposals for reform, and, on the other, the Socialists with an anti-Fascist but otherwise unconstructive programme. Moreover, the dictatorship in Estonia has operated more mildly, and departed less radically from constitutional principles, than its counterpart in Latvia.

Lithuania, again, had problems peculiar to herself. Here a religious issue cut across the straight fight between Nationalist-Agrarian and Socialist. Lithuanian nationalism demanded the restoration of Vilna; but the Vatican had recognized that province as a Polish diocese. The Christian-Democrats, who were as much a clerical as an agrarian or nationalist party, were therefore divided between two loyalties. The *coup d'état* of 1926 was executed by a group of officers in favour of the Nationalist party—a small Conservative group of landowners and industrialists—at a time when the Populists and Socialists were in office; the Christian-Democrats at first supported the Voldemaras dictatorship, owing largely to prolonged ill-feeling between the Nationalist Government and the Vatican, but they ended by going into permanent opposition, and under the Tubelis Administration were suppressed altogether. More recently the Memel dispute gave rise to some discontent, this time among the peasants, among whom there was a feeling that their interest in good trade relations with Germany was being sacrificed to a policy of extreme nationalism. None the less, the dictatorship has continued for nearly eleven years, and is only now beginning to show signs of modification; presumably, the pressing need for national unity, imposed first by the Vilna dispute and later by the Memel controversy, must be counted as the primary cause of the prolonged supremacy of a régime which appears to rest not so much—as in Estonia and Latvia—on its power to satisfy the needs of an important agricultural class, as on the support of the Army, the ability of a small group of intellectuals, and the immense personal prestige of President Smetona.

2. Estonia

Political Parties. The table of election results below[1] shows a striking shift of numerical strength from the Left and Centre parties to the Right, which consisted of the Agrarian party, or Peasants' Union, reinforced after 1923 by the New Farmers or 'Settlers'. These were the representatives of the new class of peasant proprietors created by the agrarian reforms, and became, in 1932, the left wing of a United Agrarian party.

The Agrarian party consisted chiefly of farmers who had owned

[1] See Table 8 at foot of next page.

1; Anonymous U-4 (no date) 1938 RB1 Baltic States RB1 Estonia

665 and formed the Workers' Party, or 'Kaaver-Socialist' group, secured
[196] six seats. In 1930 this group was dissolved and its seats distributed among the other parties, while the Communist party had already been declared illegal after a *putsch* engineered from Moscow in December 1924. The solidarity of the nation against Communism was illustrated by the energetic suppression of this *putsch* by General Laidoner, and the formation of a grand coalition of all the major parties, including the Social-Democrats, under Dr. Jaakson. Martial law, which had been proclaimed throughout the country, was thereafter retained permanently in certain frontier zones and on all railways; and, although during the following years plots were from time to time discovered, Communism never again got out of hand to the extent of being a national danger.

● 642 *Constitutional Reform.* As early as 1924 the question of constitutional revision was raised by Dr. Jaakson in his Ministerial Declaration immediately after the Communist *putsch*, when he suggested the desirability of separating the functions of the President of the State from those of the Prime Minister. Bills to that effect were unsuccessfully introduced in the Assembly by the parties of the Right in February 1925 and July 1926, while the Labour party tabled a
[666] separate Bill in 1926 for halving the number of deputies in the Assembly; in the same year the Assembly actually adopted a modification of the electoral law, requiring a deposit from every candidate and a minimum of two successful candidates for representation of any group in the Assembly.

668 The year 1930 saw the genesis of a speedily repressed peasant
642 'Lapuan' movement in South Estonia, somewhat on the lines of its Finnish prototype, but without the latter's anti-Communist character. This organization expressed its dissatisfaction with parliamentary 'absolutism', talked of a march on Tallinn, and proposed to petition for the reduction of the number of deputies and the diminution of their salaries. A far more important movement was set on foot in March 1931 by the Ex-service Men's Federation, which passed a resolution demanding the institution of a President of the State with extensive powers, an electoral system which allowed for votes for individuals instead of for lists, and the reduction of the number of deputies, with the threat that, if the Government did not accede to these requests within three months, the Federation would proceed to a popular referendum.

578 There now began a three-cornered struggle between the Agrarian
642 and Centre parliamentary groups, which favoured moderate reform; the Ex-servicemen—henceforth known as the 'Liberators'—who demanded far wider powers for the President of State than the former were willing to concede; and the Social-Democrats, who were opposed

to the institution of the office of President in principle. In August 578
1932 a Bill creating the office of President and reducing the number 642
of deputies to eighty, which had been adopted by the *Riigikogu* in March, was rejected in a referendum by 330,236 to 315,900 votes. A second and somewhat similar Bill, passed by the *Riigikogu* in February 1933, suffered an overwhelming defeat in a referendum held in the following June, about 67 per cent. of the votes cast being against it—the defeat of both projects being due as much to the opposition of the Socialists as to that of the Liberators.

The Government were therefore obliged to allow the Liberators to put their own proposals to the public vote; but, in the meantime, they extended the emergency law (a mild form of which had applied to certain districts ever since 1924) over the whole country, suppressed all extremist organizations of both the Right and the Left Wings, including the Liberators' League—which by now had cast its nets wide and was believed to have connexions with the Nazi party in Germany, and even augmented the quorum necessary for the acceptance of the Bill. In spite of these precautions the Liberators' project was approved, in the referendum held on October 14–16, 1933, by 416,000 votes to 157,000. Thereupon M. Tõnisson's Government resigned, and M. Paets formed a non-party Cabinet.

The Dictatorship. What was virtually a new Constitution thus 643
came into force on January 24, 1934. To the new office of President of the State, for which elections were to be held every five years by direct and universal suffrage, were attached extremely wide powers, including the conduct of home and foreign policy, the appointment and dismissal of officials, and the initiation of legislation. The President was to appoint the Cabinet, and could dismiss it; he could adjourn the *Riigikogu*, which was now reduced to fifty members—or could dissolve it and hold new elections; he had the right of absolute or suspensive veto on all legislation, and in case of necessity could declare a state of emergency, and promulgate draft laws as decrees.

Pending the presidential elections, which were fixed for April, 642
M. Paets assumed the provisional presidency. The campaign for the 661
nomination of candidates was in full swing, and the chances of the Liberators' candidate, General Larka, appeared very favourable,[1] when, suddenly, on March 12, M. Paets proclaimed a state of emergency on the ground that the Liberators were planning a Nazi *putsch*. Martial law was declared for six months, and General Laidoner was appointed Commander-in-Chief. All party activities were forbidden, the Liberators' organizations were dissolved, and some 500 of their

[1] In January the Liberators had gained an overwhelming victory in the municipal elections; the results of these were annulled, however, after the *coup* of 1934.

642 leaders (not including General Larka) were arrested.[1] The presidential
661 and parliamentary elections were postponed until the end of the state of emergency, which was itself prolonged in September for another year.

642 Some attempt to adhere to constitutional procedure was made, however, in October 1934, when an extraordinary session of the *Riigikogu* was summoned; but, in view of the recalcitrant attitude of the majority of the representatives, it was immediately prorogued, and in January 1935 President Paets announced the Government's
[475] intention of replacing the new Constitution by a system of corporative representation. A beginning was made in the following March with the creation of an Economic Council, ten of whose members were to be appointed by the President, while the remaining fifteen
[665] would be elected by the Chambers of Commerce. At the same time the single-party system was introduced, with the foundation of a Patriotic party under the direction of the Chief of Propaganda.
646 Finally, on January 8, 1936, a Bill empowering the Government to summon a Constituent Assembly was submitted to a referendum and approved by 474,218 votes to 148,824. This Bill provided that the Assembly, which was to adhere to republican and democratic principles, should consist of two Chambers: the first composed of eighty members elected by direct, universal, equal, and secret suffrage on the principle of personal election; the second of forty members, ten of whom would be appointed by the President and the remainder by the various public bodies.[2]

While the results of the elections to this Assembly, which were held in December 1936, have not been published, it is understood that little more than half the electorate voted, and that in fifty of the eighty constituencies only one candidate was presented for election, while, although some Opposition leaders were returned in the remaining thirty, even here the majority of seats fell to Government nominees. Moreover, the restrictive precautions taken during the electoral campaign were such as to evoke a manifesto in the Finnish press by four former party leaders, MM. Tõnisson, Püp, Kukk, and Teemant.

642 The National Assembly met on February 18, 1937, and was dissolved on August 17, after adopting the final draft of the constitutional law presented for their consideration by the Government. Its main provisions are as follows:

642 The President is elected for six years, by direct, universal, and
646 secret suffrage; the National Assembly consists of a Chamber of

[1] An attempted *coup* planned by the Liberators in December 1935 was forestalled by the arrest of General Larka and other leaders, and was punished by the infliction of severe sentences on some 148 prisoners, in May 1936. About half of the latter, including General Larka, have since been amnestied.

[2] e.g. by the Courts of Justice, local government bodies, corporations, churches, cultural boards of minorities, the Civil Guard, &c.

Deputies and a National Council, the first being composed of 48 642 ●
members elected by secret and universal suffrage on the basis of [646]
majority voting, and the second of 40 members—10 of whom are nominees of the President, and the remaining 30 representatives of the corporations, municipalities, and public institutions; the age qualification of voters is 22 years, of deputies 25 years, and of members of the National Council 40 years. The right to initiate legislation belongs to the Government with the President's cognizance, or to one-fifth of the Chamber of Deputies; measures relating to national defence, however, can only be proposed by the Government, while their consent is necessary for the introduction of fiscal measures by the Chamber of Deputies. Legislation rejected by the National Council requires for its option a three-fifths majority vote of the total number of deputies in the first Chamber. The President [643]
has the right of dissolution and suspensive veto, and the power to govern by decree between parliamentary sessions; he appoints and dismisses the Government, and, in the event of a vote of no confidence by the Chamber of Deputies, he may either dismiss the Government or order new elections; his acts must be countersigned by the Prime Minister and the competent Minister, and he may be impeached before the State Court; with the consent of the Chamber of Deputies he can submit any measure to a national referendum. Constitutional amendments may be proposed either by the President or by a majority of either of the two Chambers, and, in the event of the National Assembly's rejection of such a proposal made by the President, the latter may submit it to a referendum. Provision is made for legislation setting up autonomous professional corporations; freedom of conscience and religion are guaranteed, and there is no State Church; national minorities are permitted to establish autonomous institutions for cultural purposes and social assistance; instruction in their schools is to be conducted in their own language and in that of the State.
The Constitution came into force on January 1, 1938, and elections [645]
to the new Chamber of Deputies took place on February 24–5, when the Patriotic Front gained fifty-five out of the eighty seats. No other parties were permitted, but several of the former party leaders, including MM. Piip and Tõnisson, were returned. On April 24, 1938, M. Paets, by 219 votes to 19, was elected the first State President under the new Constitution.

3. Latvia

Political Parties. Five main groups are shown in the table below:[1] 665
the Agrarians; the Right, Centre, and National Minority groups, one

[1] See Table 9 on next page.

June certain leaders of the extreme Fascist organizations, including the Pehr Konkrusta Society, were also arrested, while in October a number of Lettish Germans and a few German nationals belonging to the Baltic Brotherhood—a society working for the absorption of the Baltic States by Germany—were sentenced to short terms of imprisonment.

The Government had announced in 1934 that it would draft constitutional reforms, curtailing the power of the *Saeima* and increasing those of the President, who, by an Army Law of January 1, 1935, was appointed the supreme chief of all the armed forces. On March 19, 1936, a law was issued providing that on the expiry of President Kviesis's second term of office on April 11, M. Ulmanis should become acting President until the completion of the constitutional reform. Meanwhile, preparations were in train for an entirely new constitution on corporative lines; in January 1936 a law was promulgated creating a national economic council, consisting of representatives of the Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Agriculture, Labour, and Artisans, to deal in an advisory capacity with questions submitted to it by the Government. The Council did not meet, however, until January 1938; nor was martial law allowed to lapse until the following February, when it was replaced by a new 'Law for the Defence of the State', giving extraordinary powers to the Minister of the Interior with regard to the press, the liberty of the subject, and the rights of association and assembly.

4. Lithuania

Political Parties. From November 1918 to June 1926, political life in Lithuania was dominated by the nationalist and clerical **Christian-Democratic Party**,[1] which was founded in 1890, and which,

[1] Table 10. *Lithuanian Election Results, 1920–36.*

Parties	*Constituent Assembly 1920–2*	*1st Seimas 1922–3*	*2nd Seimas 1923–6*	*3rd Seimas 1926–7*	*4th Seimas 1936*
Christian-Democrats, Peasant Union, Federation of Labour	59	15 12 11	14 14 12	14 11 5	.. .. ..
Populists	29	19	16	22	..
Social-Democrats	14	11	9	15	..
Communists	..	5	..	..	..
Farmers' Party	..	..	..	2	..
Nationalists	..	..	..	3	46
Minorities:					
Jews	6	3	6	3	..
Poles	3	2	11	4	..
Russians	..	..	1	..	..
Germans	1	..	2	6	3
Total	112	78	85	85	49

while it consisted mainly of peasants, included voters of all classes, as well as a great number of Roman Catholic clergy. Although anti-Communist in social policy, it was moderately democratic, and supported the agrarian reforms—while defending private property and the compensation of expropriated landlords—and the workers' right to organize and to strike. In foreign policy it was extremely anti-Polish; apart from its nationalist aims, its chief concern was the protection of religious interests. Its leaders included M. Bistras, Dr. Karvelis, and Father Krupavičius. Closely allied with the Christian-Democrats, and acting with them until 1926 as a single parliamentary *bloc*, were the **Peasant Union**, led by MM. Stulginskis, Mikšys, and Petrulis, and the **Federation of Labour** (founded in 1919), both of which were originally off-shoots designed to draw into the Christian-Democratic party the representatives of all classes of voters. The **Federation of Labour**, which counted among its leaders Drs. Ambrozaitis and Milčius, and MM. Radzevičius and Kasakaitis, was composed of non-Socialist workers and a number of small land-owners and new settlers.

The six Cabinets formed between the promulgation of the Constitution in 1922 and the elections of May 1926 were composed, without exception, of members of these three parties; and during this period the veteran leader of the Peasant Union, M. Stulginskis, held the office of President of the State. In March 1923 M. Galvanauskas (non-party), who had been Prime Minister since 1922, resigned, feeling that a realignment of forces had taken place now that the Constitution and the agrarian reform had ceased to be the main issue, and the *Seimas* was prematurely dissolved by the President; but the second *Seimas* differed very little in composition from its predecessor. M. Stulginskis was re-elected President, and M. Galvanauskas's fourth Ministry was followed by those of MM. Tumėnas (Christian-Democrat), Petrulis (Christian-Democrat), and Bistras (Peasant Union). In May 1926 the natural term of the second *Seimas* expired, and in the subsequent elections the Christian-Democrats suffered a severe defeat, due partly to their inability to prevent the Vatican from concluding a Concordat with Poland, whereby Vilna was recognized as a Polish diocese, partly to the corrupt practices of the party itself, which had filled public offices wherever possible with its own nominees, and partly to the prevailing economic depression.

A coalition of **Populists** and **Social-Democrats** under the Populist leader, M. Sleževičius, now took office, and Dr. Grinius, also a Populist, was elected President. The **Populist**, or **People's Socialist party**, the largest single group in the *Seimas*, which had started life in 1902 as the Lithuanian Democratic party, drew its membership from much the same classes as did the Christian-

665 Democrats, and shared their nationalist and social policies, while being absolutely opposed to their views of the part that religious interests should play in politics. The **Social-Democrats**, led by M. Kairys and Professor Čepinskis, were also a nationalist group of pre-War origin, affiliated with the Second International, and with a constitutional programme which included the nationalization of banking and industry.[1]

●642 665 Within six months, however, this Cabinet of the Left-Centre was brought to an untimely end; although relatively successful in foreign policy—a Treaty of Neutrality and Non-aggression was concluded with the U.S.S.R. on September 27, 1926—the Government roused opposition at home by the concessions which it was obliged to make to the national minority groups as a *quid pro quo* for their parliamentary support, by giving way to the Social-Democrats' demands that the public services should be purged of Christian-Democratic officials, and above all by its policy of allowing considerable latitude to Communist activity and propaganda. Moreover, the economic depression had not been alleviated, while the hopes of improved trade relations with Russia as a result of the new treaty had been disappointed. Finally, the Government's decision to cut down the army establishment, in compliance with the demands of a section of its supporters, seems to have alienated the officers' clubs.

The Voldemaras Dictatorship, 1926–9. The *coup d'état* executed on the night of December 16, 1926, by a number of officers including General Ladyga and Colonels Skorupskis, Plekavičius, and Grigaliunas, brought into power the Nationalist party, a small group of conservative landowners and industrialists led by MM. Smetona and Voldemaras, which had not appeared as a parliamentary group until the elections to the third *Seimas* in May 1926, when it returned only [661] three members. The Sleževičius Cabinet was now arrested and forced to resign; martial law was declared on the pretext of an imminent Communist *putsch*, and various public buildings were occupied by troops; and President Grinius was compelled to invite M. Voldemaras to form a new government, a task which the latter, with the support of a number of Christian-Democrats, accomplished in a single day. A Rump Parliament, consisting of only forty members of the Right, approved the resignation of President Grinius and of its Speaker, M. Staugaitis (Populist), and on December 19 elected M. Smetona as President and passed a vote of confidence in the new Government.

M. Voldemaras proceeded to draft constitutional amendments, which it was his original intention to submit to a popular referendum;

[1] The Communist party was illegal, and appeared in the first *Seimas* only, disguised as the 'Workers' Group'.

but the opposition from every quarter was so strong that he never actually did so. The remnant of the *Seimas* was dissolved on April 12, 1927, after a vote of no-confidence; but the Christian-Democrats insisted that any scheme for constitutional revision must be preceded by new elections to the *Seimas*, while the other parties threatened to boycott the scheme altogether. In May the Christian-Democratic members of the Cabinet resigned, and in June the whole party went into opposition. In the autumn, numbers of Social-Democratic and Populist leaders were thrown into prison, and many more fled to Vilna, where they organized an emigré Opposition movement; martial law and the press censorship were tightened up; and an unsuccesaful attempt by a group of army officers, in November, to force M. Voldemaras to compromise with the Opposition only resulted in the dismissal of the Commander-in-Chief. Early in 1928 several more Christian-Democrats were imprisoned, and in May the last of the non-nationalist Government parties, the Labour Federation, withdrew its support.

Finally, on May 15, 1928, the new Constitution was promulgated without the Opposition's consent. It provided that the President, who would be elected for a seven-year term by a college of representatives of the whole nation, should have the power to dissolve the *Seimas* and issue decrees when it was not in session; that laws should be drafted by a State Council, and that a three-fifths vote should be required for a vote of no-confidence in the Cabinet;[1] it was to come into force immediately, but was to be ratified within the next ten years. Its publication made singularly little difference to the situation, however, as the Nationalists continued to govern without summoning the *Seimas* for the next eight years.[2]

By April 1929, when the Social-Democratic party was suppressed by decree, the prisons were full of the leaders of all parties, while M. Voldemaras was organizing nationalist societies (such as the 'Iron Wolf' and the 'Sharpshooters') into a kind of Fascist Militia, in the hope of undermining the influence of the officers' clubs which had brought him to power. Finally, soon after an abortive attempt to assassinate him in May, he quarrelled with President Smetona and the rest of his colleagues, who attacked his policy in general, and in particular the violently anti-Polish attitude which he had adopted in the Vilna dispute at the League Council. In view of the waning

[1] Other reforms included the reduction of the number of deputies, the raising of the age qualification for the franchise to twenty-four years, and the extension of the *Seimas*'s term to five years; it was also proposed to amend the Electoral Law so as to allow majority voting for individual candidates.

[2] In September 1928, during one of M. Voldemaras's absences in Geneva, the President ventured to promulgate a law setting up the Council of State prescribed by the Constitution, but it seems to have faded into the background when the Prime Minister returned.

1: Anonymous U-4 (no date) 1938 RB1 Baltic States RB1
Lithuania

support of the Army and of the President, he was obliged to resign his post on September 19, and, although he subsequently made several attempts to seize the reins again,[1] he never succeeded in doing so.

The Tubelis Administration, 1929–1938. President Smetona now invited his brother-in-law, M. Tubelis, to form a Cabinet which, with certain alterations, has remained in office to this day; M. Zaunius became Foreign Minister, while M. Rusteika retained the post of Minister of the Interior which he had held under M. Voldemaras. For a time the prospects of a return to normal political life seemed brighter. Political prisoners were released and dismissed officials reinstated; party leaders who had gone into voluntary rustication returned to the capital; in December 1929 even the ban on the Social-Democratic party was raised, although the press censorship was strictly maintained. The first provincial and municipal elections since the *coup* were held in June 1931,[2] and on December 11 an electoral college, chosen by district assemblies of the new local government bodies, met to re-elect M. Smetona as President for a term of seven years.

Opposition to the Tubelis Government steadily accumulated, however, on all sides. The persecution of the Social-Democrats continued, and by 1932 the last of the trade unions was dissolved; there was also friction, from 1931 onwards, between the Government on the one hand, and the Christian-Democrats, morally supported by the Vatican, on the other;[3] and in November 1935 both the Christian-Democratic and the Populist parties were dissolved by a decree which was confirmed and extended to all Opposition parties in February 1936. The unsuccessful attempts to stage the return of M. Voldemaras, made by small groups of officers in June 1934[4] and in January 1936, bore witness to a certain amount of disaffection in the Army. More serious were the peasant strikes which broke out in the Suvalki district in August 1935 and the spring of 1936, and the workers' demonstration and strike in Kaunas in June 1936, when the troops had to be called out, and a state of siege was proclaimed in the city. The reshuffle of the Cabinet in September 1936, when new appoint-

[1] In consequence of a series of intrigues he was banished to the country in July 1930, and the 'Iron Wolf' was dissolved in the following August. He was tried and acquitted on a charge of conspiracy in August 1931, and on a charge of misappropriation of funds in September 1932. After the failure of a *putsch*, organized by certain Army officers in June 1934, owing to the loyalty of the majority of the Army and to President Smetona's refusal to negotiate with the insurgents, M. Voldemaras was sentenced by court martial to twelve years' penal servitude on charges of high treason and of accepting assistance from a foreign Power (i.e. Germany). In February 1938 he was granted an amnesty, on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Lithuania's independence.

[2] They were boycotted by the Opposition parties, however, on account of certain restrictions on the franchise.

[3] See above, p. 40.

[4] See footnote above.

645 The reshuffle of the Cabinet in September 1936, when new appointments were made to the Ministries of Agriculture and of the Interior, was presumably the direct result of these disturbances, although M. Tubelis repudiated any connexion between the two circumstances.

666 As early as December 1933, President Smetona had foreshadowed the institution of a non-party parliament elected on a corporative basis, but—owing, probably, to the peasant disturbances—the elections to the new *Seimas*, which had been fixed for September 1935, were postponed until June 1936. A new Electoral Law was then published providing for the nomination of candidates by the district and municipal councils instead of by the parties (except in the case of Memel), reducing the number of deputies to forty-nine, and ordaining that votes should be cast for individuals instead of lists. Two seats were allotted to the Jewish minority,[1] and one to the Poles, but none to the German or Russian minorities. Out of a total electorate of 1,136,067, 775,951 (i.e. 68 per cent.) went to the polls; the majority of the deputies returned were either landowners or agricultural experts.

642 663 After nearly ten years of non-parliamentary administration, President Smetona summoned the *Seimas* on September 1, 1936, and stated that its task would be to prepare a draft reform of the 1928 Constitution, which was due to expire in 1938, on a corporative and nationalist basis. Meanwhile, the Nationalist party itself had already undergone a reorganization on Nazi lines in 1933, with the substitution of the *Führer* principle for the elective system, and the proclamation of M. Smetona as its supreme head; while, in 1935, it was decided to unite in a common front all the existing patriotic organizations, including the non-political Lithuanian Militia.

642 Finally, in February 1938, the twentieth anniversary of the proclamation of Lithuania's independence was celebrated by the issue of an amnesty to numerous political prisoners (including M. Voldemaras), and by the *Seimas's* adoption of a new constitution. Although the latter was promulgated on May 12, at the time of writing details of its provisions were not available. It was understood, however, to provide for a single Chamber Diet elected for five years by universal, secret, equal, and direct suffrage,[2] and for a Head of the State with wide powers elected for a seven-year term by delegates of the nation. Vilna was once more declared to be the capital of Lithuania.

The crisis of the following March, when Lithuania was obliged to yield to the Polish ultimatum of the 17th, demanding the renewal

[1] The Jewish candidates failed to obtain the requisite minimum of votes.

[2] Rules relating to the presentation of candidates, however, were to be determined by a special law.

1: Anonymous U-4 (no date) 1938 RB1 Baltic States RB1
Lithuania

642 of diplomatic relations, led to the resignation of the Tubelis Government. But the Cabinet formed on March 24, with Father Mironas as Prime Minister, included both M. Tubelis himself and M. Lozoraitis, who retained the portfolio of Foreign Affairs; while any hope of a broadening of the base of representation was disappointed by the exclusion of the Opposition from the new Government.

V. FOREIGN RELATIONS[1]

Introduction

131 The emergence of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as independent States required the fall of two great empires, the Russian and the German. To-day their international significance lies in the fact that, together with Poland, they form a buffer between two first-class modern Powers, the Third German Reich and the Soviet Union, and this not merely in a strategic but also in an ideological and an economic sense: strategic, since in the event of either Great Power attacking the other, the role of Belgium in the Great War might well be thrust upon the Baltic States,[2] and their territory be converted into a theatre of war; ideological, because they constitute a narrow wedge between Communist and National-Socialist totalitarian States, to whose rival propagandas they are dangerously exposed; and finally economic, since, on the one hand, the whole area consists of thinly populated agricultural country which is regarded by Germany as being peculiarly suited to extensive German colonization, while, on the other hand, it is a corridor for Russian trade with Western Europe and a seaboard which the Soviet Union might at some time consider it desirable to repossess. Moreover, if either Russia or Germany were to take possession of these countries, the Baltic Sea would be in danger of becoming little more than a private lake.

648 829 This antithesis between Germany and Russia did not, however, become apparent in any marked degree until comparatively recently. For the first decade of their history the new Baltic States regarded the Soviet Union as the common menace; Germany was a defeated and disarmed enemy, and it was not until the rise to power of the Nazi movement in 1933 that they began to entertain fears of danger from that quarter.

The problem of how to secure some measures of security *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union confronted all the north-eastern Succession States,

[1] For a detailed record of the Baltic in international affairs, see relevant sections of the *Survey of International Affairs* for 1920–3, 1924, 1925 (vol. ii), 1927, 1932, 1934, 1935 (vol. i), and 1936, issued under the auspices of the Royal Institute of International Affairs and published by the Oxford University Press.

[2] Although, since the loss of Vilna, Lithuania has no longer a common frontier with the U.S.S.R.

proposal for the constitution of Memel as a Free City on the model of Danzig, the Lithuanian Government finally decided to follow the example of the successful Polish *coup* in Vilna in 1920. A rising, organized by bands of Lithuanians who had crossed the frontier on January 10, 1923, was followed by an invasion of Lithuanian troops, on the very day when French troops were marching into the Ruhr. The French garrison was forced to give way on the 15th, a local Diet was summoned which voted the union of the Territory with Lithuania, subject to a mild degree of autonomy, and a Provisional Government was set up.

A special Inter-Allied Commission, dispatched to investigate the situation, virtually acquiesced in this *fait accompli*, withdrew the French High Commissioner and troops, and appointed a new and more moderate, but none the less predominantly Lithuanian, government. After refusing to accept a convention drafted by the Conference of Ambassadors, chiefly because of a proposal to allow Poland a share in the management of the port, the Government in Kaunas consented on May 17, 1924, to sign a revised convention drafted by a Commission of the League of Nations under the chairmanship of Mr. Norman Davis.

By the Memel Convention of 1924,[1] which came into force on August 25, 1925, the Allied Powers (Great Britain, France, Italy, and Japan) transferred to Lithuania, subject to certain conditions, all the rights ceded to them by Germany over the Memel Territory, which was henceforth to constitute, under Lithuanian sovereignty, a unit enjoying autonomy within certain limits. The Statute appended provides for the constitution of a Chamber of Representatives elected for three years by citizens of the Territory, by universal, equal, direct, and secret suffrage,[2] and for the appointment of a Governor by the President of the Lithuanian Republic. The Governor must promulgate the laws voted by the Memel Diet unless he vetoes them as exceeding the competence of the Territory,[3] or as being incompatible with Lithuania's Constitution or international obligations. He must convoke the Diet at the request of one-third of its members, and may dissolve it in agreement with the Directorate,

by the district assemblies) to carry on the administration in conjunction with a German High Commissioner during the Paris Conference, was retained as a Directory under the French administration.

[1] For text see British White Paper, Cmd. 2341.

[2] The Territory also sends deputies to the Lithuanian Diet, elected in accordance with the Lithuanian electoral law.

[3] Local affairs, including public worship, education, social welfare and labour legislation, organization of the judicial system, local taxation, &c., are within the competence of the Memel authorities. The police force is local, but is entitled to request the assistance of the Lithuanian police; the judiciary, which is also local but subject to the control of a special department of the Lithuanian Supreme Court, is appointed by the Directorate.

642 in which case elections must take place within six weeks. The ad-
361 ministration is entrusted to a Directorate of five members, who must be citizens of the Territory; the President is appointed by the Governor, and himself appoints the other members, but the Directorate holds office only so long as it possesses the confidence of the Diet.

648 It is stipulated in an Annex that the Lithuanian Government shall
504 conform to the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles concerning the Niemen; that the port of Memel shall be considered as a port of international concern, and subject to the recommendation adopted by the Barcelona Conference; and that the harbour shall be administered by a Harbour Board consisting of three members, appointed respectively by the Lithuanian Government, the Memel Territory, and the League's Communications and Transit Organization.[1]

648 It is important to note that the Memel Convention is not an
361 instrument of the League of Nations, although members of the Council may draw the attention of the Council to any infraction of its provisions, and Lithuania undertakes to submit all disputes between her and the other signatories to the Permanent Court of International Justice, whose decision is binding. Moreover, apart from the recognition of German and Lithuanian on the same footing as official languages, the Minorities Declaration made by Lithuania respecting the rest of her territories applies to Memel also. Unlike Danzig, however, Memel is placed under the guarantee of the four Allied Powers signatory to the Convention, and not under that of the League.

642 *The Working of the Convention, 1925–32.* The Constitution thus
361 imposed on Memel created an extremely difficult situation. It became
578 clear after the first elections to the Diet, when twenty-seven Germans and only two Lithuanians were returned, that the great majority of the population was anti-Lithuanian in sympathy. Yet the Governor appointed by the Lithuanian Government was expected to choose a Directorate having the confidence of the Diet. If he did so, he was bound before very long to lose the confidence of the Government at Kaunas; if he did not, his rule was unconstitutional. The result was that events in Memel tended to repeat themselves in a more or less regular series. Elections were usually followed at first by a period of relative calm; then came a phase of conflict between the Diet and the Governor, accompanied by frequent changes of Directorate; this was terminated by the dissolution of the Diet, and a period of unconstitutional administration by the Governor; finally Germany would appeal to the League Council, and the Governor

[1] The League nominee is to give special attention to international economic interests, but must not be a national of any riparian State of the Niemen; thus Lithuania gained her point in the dispute as to whether Poland should be represented on the Board.

would feel compelled to allow new elections. Between 1925 and 1933 this cycle recurred three times.

Between 1925 and 1927 three Directorates fell in quick succession owing to no-confidence votes by the Diet, until, in February 1927, the Governor dissolved the Diet and carried on the administration by a Directorate of his own nomination. As a result of an appeal to the League Council by Germany,[1] new elections were held in August, when the German parties lost four seats to the Lithuanians.[2]

A peaceful phase followed the elections of 1927, owing to the fact that M. Voldemaras' anti-Polish policy inclined him towards a *rapprochement* with Germany; but, with the rise to power of his less Germanophil successor, M. Sleževičius, in 1929, and with the introduction of a high tariff on agricultural produce in Germany in 1930, tension increased again. During 1930 the Diet twice voted no-confidence in the Directorate, and in August it was dissolved by the Governor, Colonel Merkys. Complaints referring to the prolongation of martial law, which had been extended to Memel on its introduction in Lithuania in 1926, and to various alleged violations of the Constitution, were now addressed to the League Council by members of the Diet and by Germany. The latter, however, withdrew her petition after conversations between the German and Lithuanian Foreign Ministers.

Again, after the elections of October 1930, in which the Lithuanians won five out of the twenty-nine seats, there was a comparative lull,[3] owing to the appointment of Herr Böttcher, a German Memellander, as President of the Directorate. In December 1931, however, the Lithuanian Government accused Herr Böttcher of acting unconstitutionally in conducting negotiations with a foreign Power during a private visit to Berlin. In spite of receiving a vote of confidence from the Diet on his return, Herr Böttcher was arrested, and an entirely Lithuanian Directorate was appointed on February 6, 1932. Germany then brought the matter before the League Council, which adopted a report emphasizing the 'absolute necessity' of establishing without delay a Directorate enjoying the confidence of the Diet, but virtually transferred the responsibility for handling the dispute to the Allied Powers. When the Diet voted no-confidence in a new Directorate headed by a Lithuanian, M. Simaitis, the Government

[1] For an account of the disputes between Germany and Lithuania over the question of procedure in petitions to the Council, see I. F. D. Morrow, *The Peace Settlement in the German-Polish Borderlands* (Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 446–8.

[2] Probably owing to the emigration of thousands who opted for German nationality.

[3] In May 1931, however, Germany laid before the Council complaints over financial questions and over the continuance of martial law. The former were finally settled by a Financial Agreement signed on August 18, 1932; the latter was left to be handled by the Allied Powers, who in June 1931 addressed a joint Note to the Lithuanian Government recommending the abolition of martial law, without any result whatever.

642 dissolved it on March 22, in spite of a warning from the Allied
361 Powers. The Powers, therefore, instituted proceedings against
648 Lithuania at the Hague Court on April 11.[2] Judgement was not delivered until August 11,[1] when the Court decided that the Governor was entitled, for the protection of the interests of the Lithuanian State, and if no other action could be taken, to dismiss the President of the Directorate in case of serious acts which violated the Memel Convention, or which were calculated to prejudice the sovereignty of Lithuania; that such dismissal did not by itself involve the dismissal of the other members of the Directorate; that the dismissal of Herr Böttcher and the appointment of M. Simaitis were in order; but that the dissolution of the Diet was not in order.

Meanwhile the elections for the new Diet had taken place in May, and, in spite of German accusations that the Lithuanians had been guilty of shameless manipulation, the latter only succeeded in securing five seats. As usual the elections were followed by a peaceful interlude, in consequence of the appointment of a more liberal-minded Governor, M. Bylys, to succeed Colonel Merkys, and of a German President of the Directorate, Dr. Schreiber. In August a financial agreement was concluded between the Lithuanian Government and the Memel Territory.

648 *The Advent of National-Socialism.* The Schreiber Directorate's chances of stabilizing conditions were to a large extent destroyed by the accession of Herr Hitler to power in Germany in January 1933, and were still further diminished by the German-Polish *rapprochement* of 1934, up till when the common hostility of Germany and Lithuania to Poland had exercised a moderating influence on their mutual relations.

361 In the summer of 1933 two Nazi parties were founded in Memel;
668 the first, led by Pastor von Sass, with a Left Wing programme, was
661 called the *Christliche-Sozialistische Arbeitsgemeinschaft* (C.S.A.): the
648 second and more conservative, under Dr. Neumann, was known as the *Sovog* (*Sozialistische Volksorganisation*).[2] Alive to the danger of the movement, the Lithuanian Government in November 1933 appointed a new Governor, Dr. Novakas, to suppress it. Numerous foreign officials were dismissed—most of them citizens of the Reich; labour permits issued to foreigners in private employment were withdrawn; a law for the Defence of the State enacted on February 8, 1934, penalizing members of seditious organizations, was followed by the dissolution of both the Nazi parties and the arrest of Dr.

1, [1932 - Abad. 1]

[1] For text see *The Permanent Court of International Justice*, Series A/B, No. 49, p. 337.
[2] The Nazi party in Germany supported the *Sovog* in preference to the C.S.A., and appears to have attempted in July to unify the two parties by recognizing Dr. Neumann as leader of all the Nazis in Memel.

1: Anonymous U-4 (no date) 1938 RB1 Baltic States RB1
Lithuania

ship, and to disenfranchise a large number of voters. Influenced, however, by Herr Hitler's bitter denunciations in the Reichstag on September 15, and by a further *démarche* of the three Powers on the 12th, the Lithuanian Government at last agreed to make certain concessions with regard to the German parties and to the conduct of the elections, which were watched by the British *Chargé d'affaires* at Kaunas, and were on the whole fairly conducted. The net result of all these efforts was the election of twenty-four candidates of the *Einheitsliste* and five Lithuanians; thus the latter failed to gain a single seat.

The usual post-election period of appeasement ensued; for—after the failure of two attempts to form a Directorate under a Lithuanian President—M. Baldžius, a Lithuanian Memellander and a member of the *Einheitsliste*, was appointed President.[1] The new Directorate, which received a vote of confidence from the Diet in December, repealed a number of anti-Nazi measures and began the reinstatement of officials who had been dismissed on political grounds. During 1936, moreover, there was a marked improvement in German-Lithuanian relations, beginning with a Lithuanian request for British mediation at the end of 1935, and continuing with a *rapprochement* initiated by Germany with startling suddenness in the spring of 1936;[2] and economic conditions in Memel were considerably benefited by a frontier traffic agreement concluded between the two countries in the following August. In October M. Kurkauskas resigned and was replaced by M. Kubilius, a Lithuanian lawyer who had hitherto played little part in political life. Although there were fresh arrests and trials of Nazis during 1936–7, on the other hand a large number of amnesties were granted,[3] and in February 1937 the British Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs was able to inform the House of Commons that 'the political position in the Memel territory is now generally satisfactory'.[4]

Note on the Economic Position of Memel

The economic prosperity of the Memel Territory is now entirely dependent upon that of Lithuania. This is primarily due to the fact

[1] In January 1936 M. Baldžius was replaced by M. Diomons, also a member of the *Einheitsliste*.

[2] See above, p. 88.

[3] Most of the National-Socialists imprisoned have now been released, including Pastor von Sass (in 1937) and Dr. Neumann (in 1938).

[4] Unfortunately, however, a fresh occasion for agitation was provided by the Kaunas Government's law of September 6, 1937, expropriating, against compensation, some 440 hectares of territory belonging to 24 German landowners, for military purposes and harbour development. A violent campaign ensued in the German press; and on September 25 M. Baldžius informed the Memel Diet that the Directorate had protested to the Governor against the law on the ground that the expropriation of property was exclusively the concern of the Memel authorities, and had declined to co-operate in its execution. The German Government themselves (although, not being signatories of the Convention, they had no

6: Shuster S-4 (no date) 1954 El Europe
Baltic Countries RBI

648 wars, and of the Third Partition of Poland, all three coun-
175 tries were ceded to Russia. At first the Czars governed rather benevolently, but by the middle of the nineteenth century the three had been absorbed into the "Northwest Territory"; and stern measures of Russification were resorted to. In Lithuania, for example, only Russian might be spoken. Monastic schools were closed. The Polish and Lithuanian languages were forbidden. Many thousands of persons were deported.

648 After World War I broke out, the three suffered by reason
726 of the wavering fortunes of the belligerents. In 1918 they
175 were the scene of sanguinary fighting between remnants of the German army, invading Bolshevik troops, and hastily formed armies of national liberation. The Poles also intervened. Finally, however, all three states were declared independent, and governments were formed. A period of uneasy tranquillity followed, but the predominatingly peasant population achieved a measure of prosperity. Then the Pact of August, 1939, between Stalin and Hitler and the subsequent erasure of Poland from the map of Europe inaugurated intense tribulation along the Baltic. Germans were evacuated from Latvia and Estonia. All three Republics were compelled to sign agreements with Russia permitting the establishment of military bases. Thousands fled, and countless other thousands were deported. Next came the aftermath of the Nazi declaration of war on Russia. In a very short time Hitler had the Baltic coasts under his heel, and the expulsion and liquidation of Jews began. Finally the German armies retreated, the Russians entered, and the status of the "Northwest Territory" was restored.

●642 Elections followed, and as a matter of course pro-Com-
794 munist governments were established. It should be noted that only in Estonia had a native minority of any size favored the Communist cause. Moreover, the religious affiliations of the

6: Shuster S-4 (no date) 1954 El Europe
Baltic Countries RBI

populations were deeply rooted in tradition. Estonia, with a prewar population of 1,250,000, had about 900,000 Lutherans and approximately 215,000 Greek Orthodox. There was only a small group of Roman Catholics. Lithuania, on the other hand, with 3,000,000, was predominatingly Roman Catholic. Minorities of Lutherans, Jews, and Greek Orthodox constituted about one-fifth of the population. More than half of the population of Latvia belonged to the Lutheran Church, but there were substantial Catholic and Greek Orthodox minorities. The organizational activities of the Churches were varied and rich. In Lithuania, for example, with two archdioceses and four dioceses, more than 800,000 persons were enrolled in various lay organizations. The largest daily newspaper was in Catholic hands, and the total circulation achieved by the religious press was impressive. In Latvia likewise, publications under religious auspices numbered more than a fifth of those printed.

The first Communist occupation, dating from June 15, 1940, engulfed all three nations in tragedy. The Russians decreed that every organization established before their seizure of control "jeopardized public security," and religious institutions and organizations were suppressed. Their property was confiscated; and they were forbidden to maintain any contact with the outside world. Religious instruction was curtailed drastically, the clergy being called upon to sign a pledge that they would desist from teaching religion either in public or in private. Waves of Communist propaganda, much of it directed against religion, passed over the country, burying every attempt at counteraction. Within a year the Russians had destroyed every overt vestige of the autonomous culture which these small countries had fostered during the limited time of their independence.

It was done ruthlessly, brutally, barbarously. More than